

**Simon Paulin**

**MIT Sloan School of Management  
MBA Optional Admissions Essay**



**Round II Application for Fall 2016**

JANUARY 2016

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

## PASSION TO PROTECT DIVING WITH SHARKS

Simon Paulin's Journey From  
Divemaster to Business Leader

| Inspiring a Sea of Change -  
Promoting Sustainability

| 90% of Sharks Killed  
in Our Generation Alone

*Photo of Simon Paulin  
Koh Tao, Thailand*





## Passion to Protect

Diving with Sharks *by Simon Paulin*



*About the author: Simon Paulin is a professional Divemaster whose passion for sharks started at an early age.*

Ten years ago, I encountered my first shark 30 meters underwater near Pulau Redang, off the northeast coast of Malaysia. She was a black-tip reef shark, and I recall vividly her effortless and majestic beauty. Hooked, I dove again near Chumphon, Thailand, and was graced with the presence of three stunning, five-foot-long, bull sharks. Feet away from a species labeled as one of the most dangerous, I was initially paralyzed with fear. Unexpectedly, however, my fear quickly turned into admiration and respect. I moved with them as long as I could, holding on to what became one of the most transformational experiences in my life.

Those bull sharks led me on a journey to discover my passion for marine and shark conservation. I was fascinated by the enigmatic power and grace of sharks. I learned of their importance to our planet, yet also realized that they were in trouble. In 2010, I moved to Koh Tao, Thailand to pursue my dream of becoming a professional Divemaster and joined Thailand's leading

dive school, Bans Diving, as a student and freelance dive-guide. I taught over 200 people how to safely dive using highly complex equipment, and by mitigating risks often overlooked. More importantly, I captured the curiosity of my students and taught them about the perils sharks face – dangerous fishing practices, shark finning, and environmental degradation. I became devoted to representing the most misunderstood species on our planet.

I strongly believe that my generation will be defined by how well we protect our planet. Terrifyingly, humans kill nearly 100 million sharks every year. As a professional diver who understands the disastrous consequences of shark loss, I feel an intense sense of responsibility and urgency to raise awareness by educating others and sharing my experiences.

Swimming with sharks opened my eyes to a different perspective on approaching the unknown and helped shape how I plan to impact the world. I learned to harness fear by thinking creatively and taking risks, while still respecting the amazing creatures with which we share our planet. As a future business leader, I will promote sustainable practices, becoming a microcosm for change. I can help others realize that the decisions they make can have tangible and real consequences for our marine life, and thus ourselves. I feel lucky to have interacted with sharks in their natural habitat on many of my 214 dives. I will continue to be a voice for them – a small gesture of appreciation for the oceans that have been a big part of my life and inspiration.